ESSAY: THE DESCRIPTION THEME

The purpose of a description essay is to create an impression on the reader. This type of theme should invoke the reader's senses (touch, taste, sight, sound and smell) through descriptive words and details.

Most description essays will be subjective or impressionistic instead of objective. A subjective theme will express an opinion or attitude of the writer while an objective theme only states factual details.

Subjective: The tall young lady looked like a covergirl model.

Objective: The sixteen year old girl was 5'10" and weighed 120 pounds.

Description essays are usually organized in one of two ways, spatially or chronologically.

Spatial Organization can take many forms. For example, you can organize the description of a room from your point of view, as an observer sitting in the middle describing the things around you. However, if your subject is a physical object, you should select an orderly method of describing it. You may move from top to bottom or left to right, etc. For example, you could describe a sculpture as you walk around it.

Chronological Organization lends itself to many subjects for description. For example, if you want to describe a rock concert, you could describe what the hall is like before the show, during the show, and immediately after the show. The same pattern could be applied to the description of a classroom, a stadium, or parking lot. The description of a person might be arranged around how he appears in the morning, at noon, and in the evening.

NOTE: WHICHEVER FORM OF ORGANIZATION YOU USE, BE SURE TO BE CONSISTENT AND LOGICAL.

Read the following paragraph and note the writer's attitude, how it incorporates the five senses, and the organizational pattern:

An air of death haunts my grandfather's old, red brick house. As I walk through the creaky oak door, the light barely creeps through the dirty old windowpanes. Slowly, I move into the once-lively living room. While I reach for the light switch, the soft wisp of a spider's web brushes against my hand. The smell and taste of dust are thick in the air. The new gray, crushed velvet furniture is covered with thick, clear, plastic sheets. The white walls and ceiling are now a dull, dingy gray, and there are little wisps of dust about the floor. Hearing nothing except my own heartbeat, I feel the loneliness and emptiness crash out even louder and harder. Standing there waiting for the kind, loving old gentleman to speak is the only thought in my mind. Then, with sadness, I realize--he's gone.